

From the Desk of Karen McGagin

The 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week is an important occasion to commemorate. California, as you can see from all the events highlighted in our newsletter this month, did a great job. Throughout the state, victim service providers, law enforcement officers, corrections officers, victim advocates, prosecutors, crime victims, and concerned community members gathered to recognize the rights of victims and the services we provide to help them.



Karen McGagin

As I attended some of these events around the state and listened to victims and survivors speak about their experiences, I was reminded how important it is for all of us to work together. To keep in mind our vision of providing services in collaboration with the community that supports crime victims and with victims themselves.

Toward that end I am happy to report that in March the Board convened an advisory committee for the Victim Compensation Program. The committee, drawn from a spectrum of state agencies and organizations representing crime victims, will help us identify crime victims' needs with respect to compensation, provide feedback for the Program's projects and initiatives, and follow our vision of collaboration.

The Tribute to Crime Victims' Rights on April 5 honored scores of victim services organizations that have been working on behalf of victims for more than a quarter of a century. Many of these groups are funded, at least in part, by the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). Even as we celebrate the longevity of these groups and organizations, it is important for us all to pay close attention to the future of VOCA funding that helps sustain them. There is currently a proposal in the federal budget that would remove \$1.2 billion from the federal VOCA Fund. These are funds that would support future federal, state, and local victim services. More information about this issue is available from the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators at <http://www.navaa.org>, and I encourage you to monitor the progress of this issue.

New Victim Compensation Program Poster Published

The Victim Compensation Program has published a new, bilingual, full-color poster. The new poster features the slogan, "Violence Hurts Everyone ... We Can Help," in English and Spanish. The Board is distributing the 20,000 posters throughout the state to increase public awareness about crime victim compensation. Victim witness assistance centers will each receive copies of the poster. Distribution will also include law enforcement agencies, hospitals and other victim service providers. IMC Productions at California State University, Chico, designed the poster.



A TRIBUTE TO CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS IN CALIFORNIA

California Honors Crime Victims, Survivors, and Advocates at April Tribute

On April 5, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger addressed nearly 300 crime victims, survivors, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, victim advocates, and victim service providers

gathered at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley for "A Tribute to Crime Victims' Rights in California." Sponsored by the Office of the Governor, the California District Attorneys Association, and the Institute for the Advancement of Criminal Justice, the event also featured speakers John Gillis, Director of the federal



Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

Office for Victims of Crime, and the Honorable Lois Haight, Supervising Judge of Contra Costa County Superior Court and former Chair of President Ronald Reagan's Task Force on Victims of Crime.



Opening reception at the tribute on April 5

Fred Aguiar, Secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency and Chair of the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, was also a speaker at the event commemorating the 25th anniversary of Victims' Rights Week. Several awards were presented during the tribute, and the organizers also recognized each domestic violence shelter, Mothers Against Drunk Driving chapter, rape crisis center, and victim witness assistance program in California with more than 25 years of service to the state's citizens.



Henry Renteria, director, Governor's Office of Emergency Services, recognizes rape crisis centers.



Secretary Aguiar presents award to Harold "Bosco" Boscovich, retired director of the Alameda County Victim Witness Assistance Center.



Statue of Ronald W. Reagan at Presidential Library

The tribute was held at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library to commemorate the late President's commitment to crime victim issues. President Reagan inaugurated the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week in 1981. It was his 1982 Task Force on Victims of Crime whose final recommendations shaped the future of victim services in the United States. President Reagan also signed the 1984 Victims of Crime Act into law.



Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, site of the tribute

California Crime Victims' Rights Week Events Around the State

April 10-16 was national Crime Victims' Rights Week, and Californians in every corner of the state planned different events to recognize crime victims and to advocate for their rights. The week's theme, "Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are," was emphasized in many of the events. The Board sent media kits, ribbons, and posters to victim witness assistance centers across California to help them publicize their events.

Although space prohibits listing all events held statewide, here are just a few examples of local efforts to help educate communities about crime victims' experiences and about the services available to victims of crime, including compensation.

Los Angeles Hosts Two Events

On Sunday, April 10, the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office and the Los Angeles Mayor's Office co-sponsored the 1st Annual "5K Run for Victims' Rights." One hundred percent of the more than \$40,000 funds raised in this event went to 21 community-based victim service agencies in Los Angeles. Each runner/walker received a T-shirt, a goodie bag, and a "Finisher's Medal" that featured the Olympic torch symbol and the words "National Victims' Rights Week - City of Los Angeles 5K Run/Walk." More than 1,100 runners/walkers took part in the event.



National Victims' Rights Week –
City of Los Angeles 5K Run/Walk



Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina with Karen McGagin. The Victim Compensation Program provided assistance to victims of the train derailment.

On Tuesday, April 12, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and District Attorney honored the survivors of the Glendale train derailment, as well as the victims who lost their lives in the incident and other Los Angeles crime victims. The ceremony also recognized the victim advocates, Good Samaritans, emergency personnel, and law enforcement officers who helped the victims of the Glendale derailment. The ceremony ended with a mass balloon release to pay tribute to victims of crime.

San Francisco Honors Victims' Rights Week

San Francisco District Attorney Kamala D. Harris hosted a ceremony recognizing citizens who have helped achieve justice for crime victims on Thursday, April 14. Honorees included Edward Powell and Margie Holmes, both victims-turned-survivors. Catholic Charities was honored as an outstanding community organization. Dolly Casazza, San Francisco Police Department Inspector; Brenda Deluca, District Attorney Investigator; and Braden Woods, Assistant District Attorney, were also recognized for their service to crime victims. On April 20, the office unveiled a memorial quilt honoring homicide victims.

Sacramento County District Attorney Jan Scully presented "Outstanding Citizen Awards for 2005" on April 15. This sixth annual recognition honored seven area crime victims and Good Samaritans. Also in Sacramento on April 13, the Attorney General's Office of Victim's Services hosted a Crime Victims Conference, featuring prosecutors who tried the O.J. Simpson and Scott Peterson cases.

Orange County Community Service Programs' (CSP) Victim Assistance Program held its annual awards luncheon in recognition of Victims' Rights Week. Community service awards were presented to a law enforcement and court official, and a crime scene clean-up team acknowledging their performance above and beyond their routine duties. The Betty Delaney Victim Services Award and Valor Award were also presented.

Alameda County held "A Tribute to Victims & Survivors" on April 14. The ceremony featured an amazing hanging depicting two crime victims holding up their hands. Messages written on the victim's hand read, "I have the right to be protected" and "I have the right to be heard." The hanging was made by local artist Arlene Elizabeth out of origami cranes.

San Diego County celebrated "Citizens of Courage" at its annual awards luncheon on April 13.

Santa Clara honored "Unsung Heroes" at its annual awards luncheon on April 14. Additionally, the Santa Clara County Victim Witness Assistance Center sponsored a daylong conference on April 22, the 23rd Annual Child Abuse Symposium.

Shasta County Victim Witness Assistance Center's annual luncheon honoring crime victims took place on April 13.

Riverside County held special ceremonies open to the public in Riverside, Indio, and Murietta. An ROTC honor guard presented the colors and doves honoring crime victims were released at the end of each program.

El Dorado County concluded its weeklong commemoration with a Masquerade Ball representing the many masks worn by victims of crime. The event was held dockside on the Tahoe Queen.

Yuba and Nevada counties held candlelight vigils honoring victims.

In **Kings and Tulare** counties, quilts in honor of victims were displayed at an open house.

Modoc County sponsored a victims' walk and open house.

A kids' day in the park with games, health screenings, free hot dogs, and distribution of gunlocks took place in **Mariposa County**.

San Bernardino County hosted Camp Good Grief, a three-day camp for children who lost a loved one due to violent crime.

McGruff, the Crime Dog, made a personal appearance in **Tuolumne County**, handing out prizes won in a Wheel of Fortune game.

In **Humboldt County**, an aerial photo, "I am part of the heart of Humboldt," was staged with victim advocates, social workers, law enforcement, and medical personnel.

In **Butte County**, billboards proclaiming April as Victim Awareness Month were placed throughout the community. Each billboard featured a picture of a woman and child and listed the Victim Witness Center's local phone number.



Artwork by Arlene Elizabeth featured in the Alameda County ceremony

A Capitol Gathering for Victims and Advocates: 16th Annual Victims' March

The 16th Annual Victims' March on the Capitol, hosted by the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, took place on April 12 in Sacramento. About 80 staff members from the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board took to the streets in a group walk along Capitol Mall. By joining in the day's activities, Board staff demonstrated their collective support to connect crime victims to the many excellent programs in California. The day's activities focused attention on crime victims, survivors, and the professionals and volunteers who assist them throughout California.



Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board staff walk together to the annual Victims' March on the Capitol.



Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board staff poses in front of the Capitol during the march.



Homicide Victims Memorial Wall



Silent witnesses commemorate lives lost to domestic violence.

Spotlight on San Joaquin Victim Witness Assistance Program

San Joaquin County's Victim Witness Assistance Program focuses on getting victims the help they need. The mobile Victim Witness Unit can respond at the request of police investigators to assist crime victims during the course of an investigation.

Diane Batres, Program Coordinator, said, "This may involve finding emergency housing, arranging for the cleaning of a crime scene, crisis intervention or providing referrals for counseling, transporting children to the children's shelter, or just answering questions about what happens next. Our advocates do a great job of asking victims what they need and taking care of those immediate needs."

In addition to helping victims navigate the criminal justice system and access community resources, advocates help crime victims apply for compensation and act as representatives to the compensation program on behalf of the victim or claimant. Victim advocates are also stationed at both the Stockton Police Department and San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office. A therapist works with the Program to assist with victims' immediate counseling needs.

The Victim Witness Assistance Program can work with victims in English, Cambodian, Laotian, and Spanish. Emergency awards are often granted within one day of the crime to help pay funeral expenses or assist victims with relocation.

Since 1993, the San Joaquin program also has a contract with the Board to process compensation applications as a Joint Powers Verification Unit. The program processes applications from several other surrounding counties as well, including Amador, Calaveras, Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne. Last year, the unit processed

more than \$2.9 million in compensation payments to claimants and providers.

Victims of Violent Crime San Joaquin County Support Group

San Joaquin advocates work in close collaboration with the all-volunteer Victims of Violent Crime San Joaquin County Support Group. Joyce Tuhn is one of the group's co-founders. Her daughter, Lacy Luke, was killed by a drunk driver in 1999. "Victim Witness is amazing," Tuhn said. "They go above and beyond." Victim advocates refer families to the support group, which has more than 40 members, each of whom has lost a loved one to

violent crime. The active group sponsors several events each year to bring attention to the difficulties survivors face and to honor those who have been killed. Working with the Victim Witness Assistance Program, each December the group organizes a candlelight vigil and during Victim Rights Week they co-sponsor a picnic. This year's picnic featured five local pilots flying in "missing man" formation and a balloon release.



Diane Batres, Program Coordinator, talks with Joanne Jordan, Claims Unit Supervisor, at the San Joaquin County Victim-Witness Assistance Program.



Support Group Members on a parade float in downtown Stockton, 2004.

California Leads the Nation – A Vision for Family Justice Centers Across America

California is now home to three family justice centers as well as a new federal project to provide technical assistance to such centers nationwide. At a family justice center, victims of domestic violence and their children can visit one safe, welcoming place to receive coordinated services, including victim advocacy, law enforcement, legal help, employment assistance, victim compensation, and even medical care.

Such centers offer victims access to emergency relocation funds or other financial assistance from victim compensation and a place where they can meet with social workers, attorneys who will help with restraining orders, and domestic violence advocates who can offer counseling and safe shelter.



The San Diego Family Justice Center was established in 2002 through the determination and persistence of then-Police Chief David Bejarano and then-San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn, who advocated a collaborative approach that included not only prosecutors but also investigators, advocates, and medical personnel. Modeled after child advocacy centers and multi-disciplinary domestic violence shelters, the San Diego Family Justice Center now provides more services in a single location than any similar center in the country.

"We have a saying that we are building and flying the plane at the same time," said Gael Strack, Director of the San Diego Family Justice Center, "but in reality the key to a successful Family Justice Center is keeping the needs of the victims first and being able to bring all of the partners to bear on solving problems." To date, the San Diego Family Justice Center has fielded more than 60,000 phone calls, more than 26,000 police investigations, and has served more than

13,000 clients. This year, the center is celebrating seven months without a domestic violence homicide in the City and no deaths in more than 13,000 families served – a first in the modern history of San Diego.

In October 2003, the federal Office on Violence Against Women began the President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI) to help establish family justice centers in 15 communities across the United States. Under the initiative, Gwinn has been named National Technical Assistance Director, overseeing the formation of centers from Alaska to Florida. Gwinn also now heads the San Diego County District Attorney's Victim Services Division.

The PFJCI has awarded grants to several sites across the country to develop new centers. One of those sites is Alameda County, under the leadership of Nancy O'Malley, Chief Assistant District Attorney. The Alameda County Family Justice Center has already brought together prosecution, police, community agencies, medical partners, and a faith-based component. Nearing finalization in terms of location, leasing, on-site participants, and the hiring of an executive director, the Alameda team proves that collaboration is achievable when everyone focuses on meeting the needs of the victim.

Riverside County has also recently opened a family justice center. Though not part of the federal initiative, Riverside County District Attorney Grover Trask has spearheaded a collaboration among

county agencies to open the first of three planned centers in the county. The Riverside County Family Justice Center brings together the local victim witness assistance program, the domestic violence program, legal aid, the rape crisis center, the police and sheriff's departments, social services, and probation to offer victims one-stop, centralized access to resources.



Riverside County District Attorney Grover Trask at the Family Justice Center grand opening on March 23

New Victim Compensation Program Advisory Committee Launched March 16

In March, a dozen of the Board's key partners from a spectrum of state agencies and statewide organizations representing crime victims were invited to serve on the new Victim Compensation Program Advisory Committee. Representatives from the Office of Emergency Services; the Attorney General's Office; the Health and Human Services Agency; the Department of Corrections; the Judiciary; the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training; and victim advocacy organizations were invited to join the Committee.

At the first meeting on March 16, the Committee heard a presentation from Dr. Alicia Boccellari, Director of the University of California San Francisco Trauma Recovery Center, on the Center's successful three-year pilot program to provide

comprehensive service to victims of violent crime in an underserved community.

In future meetings the Committee will work to identify crime victims' issues and needs with respect to compensation, as well as to provide feedback for the Program's projects and initiatives. The Committee will also provide an important avenue for coordination, networking, and new collaborative efforts among agencies, organizations and departments serving victims.

Committee meeting schedules and agendas will be posted in advance and are open to the public. The next meeting of the Victim Compensation Program Advisory Committee will take place on Wednesday, June 15, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Board's office in Sacramento.

Board Meeting Schedule for 2005

The Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board will meet on the following dates for the remainder of 2005. Meetings are open to the public. The Board meets at 10 a.m., generally on the third Thursday of the month, in the first floor hearing room at the Board's office, 630 K Street, Sacramento, CA, 95814. Visit the Board's website, www.victimcompensation.ca.gov, for more information about the meetings.

May 19, 2005
June 16, 2005
July 21, 2005

August 18, 2005
September 15, 2005
October 20, 2005

November 17, 2005
December 15, 2005

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Thanks to the staff members of all the victim witness assistance centers who contributed to the information in this newsletter, especially in Butte, El Dorado, Riverside, Orange, Alameda, San Francisco, Sacramento, Santa Clara, San Diego, and Los Angeles counties, and the City of Los Angeles.

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